

"All right, Steve," she replied. "I'll tell him."

After that I felt a bit easier in my mind over the coming brawl. I went ahead with Monday's work, directing the mob with my one good eye. Hugh Foley failed to show up at all, but that didn't matter, because his work was finished, with the exception of the single scene with Hopper.

ON Tuesday morning we prepared for the important battle, and Hugh was on the lot early. He came over to me, looked at me for a minute, and shook hands without saying a word. Then he turned and walked off.

"Hughie," I called after him, "about this fight this afternoon—"

"Never mind telling me anything about it," he replied. "This is going to be a real fight, kid."

"Plenty of ginger," I said.

"Wait and see," Hugh answered, and continued toward his dressing room.

We had lunch at the usual hour, and then we all started for the final job. There was a larger crowd than usual, because the other folks in a studio always like to horn in and watch a fight. Everything was in shape, and just before we started off I noticed Julie Howard came in unobtrusively and climbed upon a pile of trunks in one corner, where she could see and hear the job in hand. I wandered over to her.

"Did you tell him?" I asked.

"I told him."

"I hope he fights," I continued.

"He ought to," Julie repeated confidently. "I think he will."

"He acts sort of queer," I remarked hopefully. "If it all comes out in this scene, we ought to have the south end of a pogrom."

The two important characters appeared presently. Hughie began the action. He was dressed in an ordinary business suit, whereas Sidney were evening clothes, which, according to the schedule, ought to be pretty well destroyed when we finished the scene.

They came in from opposite sides, looked at each other, said a few bitter words, and struck. The entire action lasted only six minutes.

I planted four cameras where they would miss nothing, because I realized before we turned a crank that this would be one encounter between gentlemen which could never be shot a second time. I either got all of it the first time or I never got it. One of my cameras was up among the rafters, shooting down, and the others aimed in from various advantageous angles. There is never a close-up in that entire scene, because you need no close-ups when you can see murder being done at a short distance.

Hugh uttered no sound after the formal set speech of his entry. The instructions called for him to look as ferocious as possible, and that was what he was doing, without any effort. He was not acting, and I knew it. Just before we began cranking I spoke briefly to Sid Hopper, who until this time believed he was as good a man as Hughie.

"You watch yourself in this scene," I cautioned. "This is going to be a real fight, so look out you don't lose a leg."

"Quit kidding me," Hopper replied airily, and that was the last airy remark he made that day, or for many days.

THERE was one person missing from the group of spectators. Old man Feltman had made a hurried trip to Chicago, and I was sorry. I wished he had delayed his trip so he could have witnessed this fight. However I consoled myself with the thought that he would see the result when he returned. I yelled at the four cameras and we began cranking.

At the beginning I heard Hugh say something to Hopper. Five minutes after the start voices were raised in protest and the bystanders began urging me to stop Hughie from killing Sydney Hopper before their eyes. It was a fight. No doubt at all.

Both of Sid's eyes were banged shut in the first three minutes, and his evening clothes were destroyed in no time, as demanded by the script. It was not a plain fistcuff combat, but bordered more on the knock-down and

drag-out type of battle. It must have come as a genuine surprise to Sidney, who had fought Hughie in other pictures without the aid of ambulances or hospitals. Tables and lamps were knocked over very realistically and curtains dragged from their poles; windows were smashed and plaster Venuses went to bits in the uproar. It was a humdinger of a fight, and every time Hughie landed, Hopper flopped.

Finally Sidney dropped under the remains of a table, and when he failed to rouse up and continue I ordered the cameras to desist. The reason Sidney stayed where he was was plain. He was clear out, sleeping the sweet sleep of unconsciousness, and far away. I then shooed the company

Hopper swings a mean fist, and he had been fighting for his life. I found a number of wind-up details that kept me busy, and later in the afternoon I went into the projection room. When I emerged, the studio was deserted and dark.

TWO days later I received an abrupt summons from old man Feltman, who had returned from Chicago. I entered his sanctum right cheerfully, because I knew he had seen the saloon stuff and was pleased for the first time in three years.

"Steve," he said when I came in, "sit down."

I sat.



"THIS IS GOING TO BE A REAL FIGHT, SO LOOK OUT YOU DON'T LOSE A LEG."

physician into the ruins and he endeavored to restore the villain. Hugh Foley walked slowly out of the studio and across the lot toward his dressing room.

"Now," I said to Julie, a few minutes later, "you can go to Hughie and tell him that you framed this up."

"It was a great fight, wasn't it?" she demanded, beaming on me.

"A bird," I admitted, "and my scheme worked great. Only there's no use letting Hugh think you care for Hopper. Go and tell him that we framed this all up for his own good."

Julie hurried away to confess and bathe her sweetheart's wounds. He had plenty of them, because Sidney

"I've been trying to decide all morning whether to fire you now or give you one more chance," he remarked, gazing at my still discolored orb.

"Fire me!" I echoed dazedly. "Did you say fire me?"

"That's what I said exactly. No director of mine can camp out in the Brig Cafe. It don't look right and, besides, it's a company rule, and well you know it. Of course Hopper is gone, but if he wasn't going I would have let him go for this. There's just one thing that saves you, Steve. You've got a corking good fight scene, and it's going to hold your job this time, but the next time you start for the Brig Cafe you can know that

you're all through as a director for the Cines-Torino."

I stared at Feltman and tried to comprehend. "Listen," I said firmly, "you're either crazy or somebody has been stringing you. I haven't been in the Brig Cafe in two years, and certainly not since I worked for you."

He grunted.

"Of course Sidney Hopper didn't give you that black eye," pointing at the dismal object in question. "Of course you and he didn't get into a disgraceful brawl."

"Of course you're off your nut," I said heatedly. "I tell you I haven't been within miles of the Brig in years. Where do you get all this news?"

Then I did learn something astounding. Feltman had his news, and it came straight from the source. Hopper had attacked me in a drunken rage, following my statement at the Brig Cafe that Hugh Foley was the best comedy-drama actor in California. The presumption was that I too was also mildly pickled. After a heated altercation Mr. Hopper walloped me plenty, and the waiters intervened in time to save my life. This was the polite news about me.

"Yes," I said dumbly, "but who started all this?"

"Julie told Hugh about it right after it happened," insisted Feltman. "She had all the details, and it may be that, disgraceful as the incident was, it had a certain definite effect in the fight between Hugh and Hopper. Hughie likes you and probably welcomed a chance to lambaste Hopper."

"Listen," I said earnestly, reaching for my hat. "I've got to go and talk to Julie. I'll send her to you and she can tell you the truth. I'm just beginning to see the workings of a lady's mind. And the truth about that eye of mine is that I walked into a door in my own innocent home. Remember that."

I STEPPED into the bright sunshine, and as it approached noon I aimed for the Silver Star Restaurant. Hugh's car was at the curb, as I half expected, and within Hugh and Julie were peacefully lunching. I burst upon them without warning.

"Fine," I said, sitting down. "You got me into a grand jam, young lady. I just came from the old man and I nearly left my job behind me. Why this yarn about Hopper busting me up?"

"Didn't he?" Hugh asked in surprise.

Julie began to laugh. "I suppose it had to come out," she said regretfully. "Now I'll have to tell Mr. Feltman it wasn't so."

"What wasn't so?" Hugh echoed. "What ails you two? Didn't Hopper maul you, Steve?"

I explained with some dignity that Julie had double-crossed me.

"Well," she said defensively, "it made Hugh fighting mad. It was a good story, wasn't it?"

"Great," I said coldly. "But what annoys me is this: Why didn't you tell him what we agreed on? She was to tell you, Hughie, that she was going to break her engagement and marry Sidney Hopper. She evidently didn't like that story, so she improved upon it."

"I did," Julie laughed, "but I couldn't tell Hugh what you wanted me to."

"Why?" I demanded, still a little sore.

"Shall we tell him, Hugh?"

"Sure," agreed our star.

"The fact is," Julie began. "The fact is"—

"Listen, Steve," Hugh interrupted. "Julie and I have been married the last two months. We weren't going to tell anybody until we finished this picture. Then we were planning on a big trip East, maybe as far as Potato City, Idaho."

I put down my glass of water and looked at the two of them in mild astonishment, and that's about all there is to it. We got our fight all right enough, but there being a lady mixed up in it, she had to do it her own way. In the mean time (adv.), in case you have an opportunity this winter to take a peek at "Lord Jones," cast your eye upon that fight scene. If it isn't a real battle, I'm a blue-nosed cassowary.

Copyright. All rights reserved.
Printed by arrangement with
Metropolitan Newspaper Service, New York.

NEXT SATURDAY'S COMPLETE STORY

ONCE A FLIRT

By LUCIAN CAREY

Illustrated by Will B. Johnstone

A Swinging Tale of How a Young Husband Treated His Coquetting Spouse to a Surprise—And Got One Himself.

ORDER YOUR EVENING WORLD IN ADVANCE